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HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE - A GOOD WAY TO LEAD THE WORLD

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

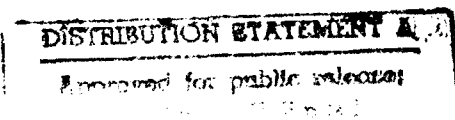
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## PREFACE

Many of the sources listed in the Bibliography are colleagues who along with myself, participated in Operation Provide Comfort. I spoke to each of them during and immediately after the mission. While preparing this paper, I contacted several of them to confirm our previous discussions. It was obvious that each person had more clearly organized his thoughts on the subject, as a result of reflecting on the mission.

During Operation Provide Comfort, I was a member of one of the Special Forces units assigned to Task Force Alpha. Although my unit executed a tactical mission, we were very aware of the operational and strategic issues involved. This seems to be true with every special operations mission.

Because of my personal experiences, it is impossible to give credit to each of my sources. The reason is because much of this information came from informal discussions during the mission, national and international news reports at the time, and my personal observations. Nevertheless, I have tried to give credit to each source.

I've focused this paper on the operational level and avoided the tactical weeds. This was not an easy task, there are many interesting and compassionate experiences I found personally difficult to exclude. Perhaps those individual accounts will be documented sometime in the future.

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# HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE - A GOOD WAY TO LEAD THE WORLD

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The United States has emerged as the world's only super power with the demise of the Soviet Union. Without the evil empire to threaten us, action has been taken to create an anticipated peace dividend so that our nation's infrastructure can be improved. The dividend is being created by reducing the military's size and limiting weapons procurement.

Despite the ongoing reductions, the world's expectations have not changed about the United States' role as a super power. Many nations expect and hope that the United States will take the lead in reducing regional conflicts around the globe. Many Americans feel the same way.

There are some concerns about the military's ability to maintain the same level of proficiency that it had prior to the reductions. Most of the concerns relate to mid and high intensity conflict missions. However, even with the reductions, the military should not lose its ability to influence world events in a low intensity conflict environment.

One low intensity conflict mission in particular should provide the United States opportunities to use its position to influence world opinion and promote regional stability. Humanitarian assistance is that mission. If executed well, the

U.S. can invest relatively few resources to show the world that we are a compassionate people interested in world peace. This paper is going to present the U.S. military's role in Operation Provide Comfort as a model for future humanitarian assistance missions. It will attempt to answer the following three questions. What was the military's mission? Which principles of war were used to accomplish the mission? What lessons were learned that can be applied to future humanitarian assistance missions?

## CHAPTER II

### HISTORY

In order to understand the difficulties of Operation Provide Comfort, it is necessary to briefly review Kurdish history. The Kurd's history, as a distinct ethnic group, is somewhat clouded. By the thirteenth century, the mountainous border region where Iran, Turkey and Iraq join was referred to as Kurdistan.

Kurds have traditionally organized under local family heads. Over time, many family heads emerged as tribal chiefs who controlled the tribe's political, economical and social structure. In addition to the chief, each region had its local Muslim priest, who also exerted great influence in the villages and regions. The Kurds never developed a centralized government or autonomous Kurdish nation because of tribal loyalties, dialect differences and power struggles between neighboring tribes. These same factors contributed to frequent fighting between the Kurds and their Persian, Turkish and Arab neighbors.

Prior to World War I, the area referred to as Kurdistan was located in the Ottoman Empire. After World War I, the Ottoman Empire was subdivided by the victorious Allies for fighting as a member of the Axis Powers.

Unfortunately, neither the British or French fully understood the historical or cultural differences in the Middle

East. Instead of dividing the region based upon ethnic, linguistic, and religious similarities, it was divided based upon geographical features and arbitrary boundaries. However, Articles 62-64 of the Treaty of Sevres, which was the basis for dividing the Ottoman Empire, did provide for creating an independent Kurdish nation. But Articles 62-64 were never acted upon.<sup>1</sup> As a result, Kurdistan was divided among Syria, Turkey, Iran and Iraq.<sup>2</sup> Kurds have become the largest minorities in Turkey, Iran and Iraq. Smaller Kurdish groups also live in Lebanon, Syria and the Armenian region of the former Soviet Union.

Based upon old ethnic rivalries, civil unrest between the Kurds and the governments of Turkey, Iraq and Iran rapidly erupted after WWI. In each country, different Kurdish tribes tried to break away from the existing government to establish an autonomous Kurdistan.

In 1925, there was a major uprising in eastern Turkey which lasted for thirteen years. Depending upon the source, estimates of Kurdish deaths during this period were as great as 250,000 people. In 1932, the Turks began using deportation, relocation and martial law in an effort to pacify the Kurds. Parts of eastern Turkey remained under martial law until 1938.<sup>3</sup> In spite of Turkish efforts, civil and political unrest continued. During the seventies and eighties, military units were used routinely to subdue Kurdish insurrectionist activities in eastern Turkey. The Turkish government's Kurdish problem has been aggravated by the



fact that it has refused to recognize the Kurds as a distinct ethnic community.<sup>4</sup> Instead, they are officially viewed as mountain Turks.

After World War I, Iran faced internal strife among its many ethnic groups. The Kurds presented the most serious internal threat to the Iranian government. In 1921, a Kurdish leader named Ismail Shakkak Simko, controlled a large area in northwestern Iran. In 1922, the Iranian government eventually defeated his forces and forced them to withdraw into Iraq.<sup>5</sup>

During World War II, the Soviet Union controlled northern Iran. Immediately after the war, an armed Kurdish group created the small Republic of Mahabad. But, when the Soviets withdrew, the Iranian government used force to reestablish its control over the area.<sup>6</sup> It is interesting to note that an Iraqi Kurdish group, led by Mustafa Barzani, helped the Iranian Kurds establish Mahabad. This is interesting because Barzani and his son later became the key leaders in the Iraqi Kurdish movement.

The Iranian Kurds tried to gain independence again when the Shah of Iran's government fell. The Kurdish insurgency gained control over most of Iranian Kurdistan. But when the Ayatollah Khomeini gained power, he too used the military to regain control over the Kurdish controlled area. Within two days, the Kurdish towns of Paveh, Sanandy and Saqqiz were recaptured.<sup>7</sup>

The country of Iraq was created by combining three former Ottoman Empire provinces. The southern province consisted of Arabic Shiite Muslims, the middle province of Arabic Sunni

Muslims, and the northern province of Kurdish Sunni Muslims. From the end of WWI until 1932, Iraq was a British mandate.

In 1932, Iraq became the first mandate to gain independence. For the next thirty years the Iraqi Kurds sporadically tried to create an Iraqi Kurdistan. A major uprising erupted in 1961. Iraqi Kurds, led by Mustafa Barsani and other Kurdish leaders, fought Iraq's government for five years. In 1966, the Iraqi government, under Abdul Rahman Arif, negotiated a cease fire that lasted until 1969.<sup>8</sup>

During 1969 and 1970 the Kurds battled the newly ruling Iraqi Baath government. An agreement was reached, which included autonomy for the Kurds, but the Baath Party's deputy secretary-general, Saddam Hussein, repeatedly demonstrated that the Kurds would not receive the promised autonomy.<sup>9</sup>

Barzani's followers began fighting again in 1974, this time with the clandestine support of the Shah of Iran and the United States. In 1975, Saddam ordered his Air Force to bomb civilian communities in an unsuccessful effort to break the Kurds' will to fight. Then the Shah and Saddam made an agreement which resulted in Kurdish support being withdrawn. Barzani was forced out of the country and later died in Walter Reed Hospital.<sup>10</sup> His son, Massoud Barzani, assumed the leadership of the Iraqi Kurdish resistance in north and northwestern Iraq, while Jalal Talabani emerged as the main leader of the movement in northeastern Iraq.

During the Iran-Iraqi War, Ayatollah Khomeini made a deal with Barzani's Iraqi Kurds.<sup>11</sup> Khomeini promised them autonomy in

northern Iraq, in exchange for helping the Iranians seize the oil fields located near the northern city of Kirkuk, Iraq. Had Saddam lost the revenues from those oil fields, economic problems may have caused his defeat. But even with Barzani's support, the Iranian army was defeated before they reached the oil fields. Saddam later retaliated against those Kurds by ordering the infamous chemical weapons strike against Barzani's Kurdish fighters and civilian population.

Talabani refused the Ayatollah's offer, and his followers even fought the Iranians at one point. In response, Saddam made a deal with Talabani. Saddam offered to make Talabani the "governor" of northern Iraq, and he offered to grant future autonomy to the Kurds, under Talabani's governorship, if they continued to fight the Iranians. This deal temporarily increased Talabani's power among Iraq's Kurds, but it also created considerable friction within the Kurdish resistance movement.<sup>12</sup>

The conflicts mentioned above are only the major ones. Many minor armed conflicts occurred between the Kurds and the established governments of Turkey, Iran and Iraq. Also, the Kurdish groups continued fighting among themselves. Several times Turkey, Iran and Iraq's governments financially supported one Kurdish group against another. The result is that the Kurds and the surrounding governments have a great amount of distrust for each other.

During the 1991 Gulf War, Kurdish resistance forces did not actively support the Coalition Forces or Saddam, although Talabani did make overtures to the U.S. State Department.<sup>13</sup> Within three weeks of Iraq's defeat, Iraqi Kurds tried again to create an independent Iraqi Kurdistan. Saddam still had enough military forces to ruthlessly crush the short-lived Kurdish uprising.

Experiencing indiscriminate destruction of property, murder, rape, and worse, over one million Kurdish civilians fled their homes in panic. Several hundred thousand escaped into Iran and Turkey, then the Turkish government closed its eastern border in an effort to maintain internal order. Over 500,000 Kurds were trapped in the snow covered mountains without life's necessities.

Newsmen from around the world quickly and accurately reported the dismal situation. World opinion galvanized in support of the trapped, starving Kurds. Secretary of State, James Baker, personally visited the area and reported the crises' severity to President George Bush. President Bush then decided to use the United States military to relieve the Kurd's misery.

This last Kurdish crises developed so quickly that it was hard to grasp the magnitude of the problem. The Kurds fled Saddam's troops so fast that many did not have time to take sufficient food, clothing or shelter to live in Iraq's rugged mountains during the winter. Over four hundred people were dying from exposure and dehydration daily, and a lack of water threatened thousands more with death.<sup>14</sup> As fleeing Kurds grouped

together in the mountains to form ad hoc camps, they faced outbreaks of cholera and other diseases because of poor sanitation conditions. A rapid, massive response was critical if many of these fleeing Kurds were going to be saved from certain death.

## CHAPTER III

### THE MISSION

On 5 April 1991, President Bush gave the Department of Defense the mission of providing food to the Iraqi Kurdish refugees in order to reduce their suffering and deaths. The mission was assigned to Commander in Chief, Europe (CINCEUR) and the military forces assigned to European Command (EUCOM). EUCOM began air dropping supplies to the Kurds within thirty-six hours of President Bush's decision.<sup>1</sup>

The EUCOM staff identified an immediate, intermediate and long range objective in order to complete its assigned mission. The immediate objective was to begin air dropping supplies to the Kurds and stabilize them in the mountains as soon as possible. At that time, the refugees were scattered in eight large and more than thirty smaller concentrated groups.<sup>2</sup> This did not include the innumerable extended family groups which were scattered between the concentrated areas. The intermediate objective was to resettle the refugees into temporary transit camps which the relief forces would build. The long range objective was to return the refugees to their homes.<sup>3</sup>

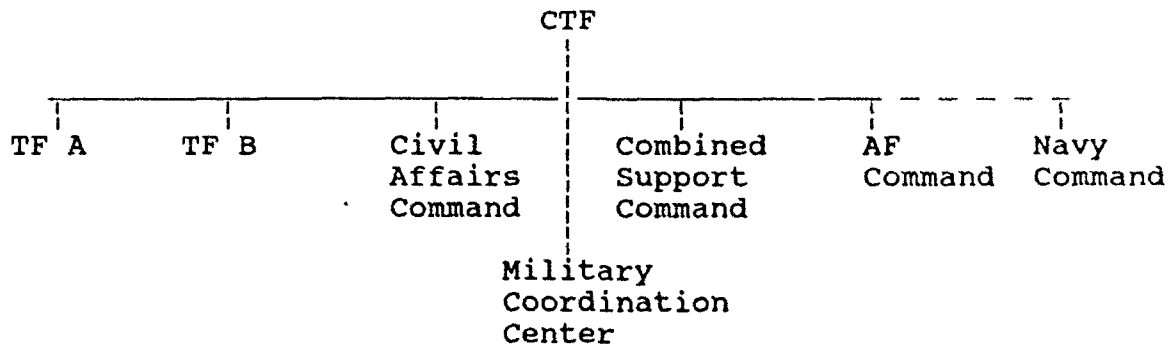
One major obstacle opposed the relief effort. Despite his major losses in the Persian Gulf War, Saddam still had the means to pose a serious threat to humanitarian relief forces. The Kurds were so brutalized by his troops that they preferred to die in the mountains, rather than risk capture by the Iraqi forces.

As long as the Iraqi troops remained in the nearby low-lands and Kurdish villages, they would not consider leaving the mountains.

EUCOM created Joint Task Force (JTF) Provide Comfort to execute this mission. It was created even though the major tasks and the sequence to accomplish the tasks was not yet known. The JTF immediately began the air supply operations mentioned earlier. Within a couple weeks, the following eight tasks were identified as being essential for achieving EUCOM's initial, intermediate and long range objectives.<sup>4</sup>

1. Provide immediate relief and stabilize the population.
2. Build a distribution system/infrastructure for continuous logistics support.
3. Establish a Security Zone in Northern Iraq.
4. Construct temporary facilities, i.e., transit centers, way-stations, support centers, etc.
5. Transfer the refugee population to the temporary sites.
6. Transition the humanitarian operation to the international relief agencies.
7. Enable the ultimate return of the refugees to their homes.
8. Provide continuous security for all aspects of the operation.

Almost immediately after the U.S. decision to provide assistance, other nations responded as well. Thirteen nations would send troops and over thirty would provide supplies.<sup>5</sup> The Joint Task Force transformed into a Combined Task Force (CTF). It's task organization evolved into the organization depicted on the next page.<sup>6</sup>



The Combined Task Force was commanded by a first generation American; he is an east European immigrant named General John Shalikashvili. Today he is CINCEUR, but when Provide Comfort started, he was the Deputy Commander of U.S. Army Europe (USAREUR). He and most of the CTF staff were provided by USAREUR. They provided the overall control, communication and coordination functions necessary for an operation of this magnitude.

In addition to normal staff functions, the CTF operated a Joint Operations Center, a Logistics Readiness Center, and a Civil-Military Operations Center. These centers coordinated actions between the CTF and EUCOM staffs, international forces, international relief organizations, and the various civilian factions.

Task Force Alpha (TF A) included British marines, Canadian ambulance drivers, U.S. Army and Air Force special operations forces, a U.S. demolition team, and various signal units. TF A soldiers had the responsibility of entering the mountains and stabilizing the chaos. Their actions were critical in each camp.



The soldiers helped by organizing and participating in the distribution of supplies, providing medical support and sanitation assistance, coordinating the local efforts of the international relief organizations, and working with the Kurdish tribal leaders and representatives of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). They also contacted and convinced the refugees in the smaller camps and scattered family groups to move into the larger camps.<sup>7</sup>

The first ground relief unit entered "Camp" Isekveren, which had 100,000 people. The refugees were so disorganized that it took over a week before order came to the camp.<sup>8</sup> The second unit entered Camp Yekmal. Yekmal only had about 10,000 refugees, but its population ballooned to over 70,000 within two weeks. Due to its initial small size, location, and other factors, this camp started to reflect order the day after the American soldiers arrived.<sup>9</sup> The organizational experiences and numbers in the other six camps fell somewhere in between Isekveren and Yekmal.

After the mountain camps were stabilized, TF A assisted with the orderly relocation of the refugees to the newly built refugee camps, and they helped turn the relief effort over to UNHCR. Only seven weeks after the first air relief mission, all of the refugees were relocated to either a temporary camp or their own villages.

Task Force Bravo (TF B) was assigned British, Dutch and Luxembourg infantrymen, Italian special forces, French parmarines, Spanish, French, and U.S. helicopter units, a U.S.

Marine expeditionary unit, special operations capable (MEUSOC), U.S. Army paratroopers, and several other small units.<sup>10</sup> It was tasked to create the security zone in Northern Iraq on April 16, 1991,<sup>11</sup> so that the refugees could eventually return home safely.

In view of the coalition's recent success in Operation Desert Storm, the casual observer may think that it was easy to create a security zone. However, TF B had to concern itself with the response of Barsani and Talabani's resistance forces, the anti-American Dev Sol terrorist group, and Iraqi forces. Mine fields and unexploded bombs remained from Desert Storm and the recent Kurdish uprising. Also operating nearby were the Turkish Kurds who had been fighting for an independent Turkish Kurdistan. These groups' initial responses to foreign intervention were uncertain.

TF B was responsible for constructing the transit centers in Northern Iraq. Originally up to twelve camps were planned, each with a 20,000 person capacity, but only four were started and just two were completed.<sup>12</sup> (The coalition also used a temporary camp located in Silopi, Turkey. That camp is used annually by Turkish Muslims making pilgrimages to Mecca.) The reason why only two new camps were completed is because TF B's security mission was so successful. Most of the refugees were returned directly to their homes.<sup>13</sup>

TF B also used the Marine Corps Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company (ANGLICO) teams to support each of the U.S. services and

coalition forces. The teams helped to standardize the procedures for close air and indirect fire support. The Marine fixed wing fighters were prepared to provide close air support.<sup>14</sup>

The Civil Affairs Command was a single service command from the U.S. Army. Most of its soldiers were reservists who had been activated for Operation Desert Storm. They were redirected from Saudi Arabia or Kuwait, instead of being returned to the United States for deactivation.

These soldiers performed a variety of missions. They helped TF A and TF B to better interface with the refugees, provided guidance on the organization of the transit camps, and then administered the camps until they were turned over to UNHCR. Civil Affairs Command also operated a Civil-Military Operations Center for the CTF staff. That enabled the CTF to interface more effectively with the civilian international relief agencies.<sup>15</sup>

The Military Coordination Center (MCC) was staffed by members of the United States Military Liaison Mission from Potsdam, Germany. Its mission was to establish direct liaison with the Iraqi military while TF B was creating the security zone. They maintained constant communications with the Iraqis so that incidents would be diffused before they escalated into major confrontations. The MCC was located in Zakhu, Iraq, and had representatives from Barsani and Talabani's political groups, the United Nations, coalition forces, and the Iraqi Army.<sup>16</sup> Their interaction and efforts did reduce military confrontations.

The Combined Support Command (CSC) consisted of many support units from EUCOM's 21st Theater Army Area Command. Units from the other services and the coalition forces were also part of the CSC. Included in its command were finance, administration, medical, transportation, quartermaster, ordnance, chemical, signal, supply, and maintenance support soldiers.<sup>17</sup> They built the distribution system for the refugees and created the support infrastructure for all humanitarian relief soldiers.

The CSC faced difficult challenges in building the distribution system, one of the largest being the great distance from the seaports to the Kurds. Two other challenges were the poor transportation network in Turkey and a shortage of available overland transportation assets. To overcome these challenges, CSC relied heavily upon airlift to move supplies to forward staging bases at Silopi, Diyarbakir, and Incirlik, Turkey. Thousands of tons of supplies were flown from Silopi to the mountain camps by helicopter. CSC also contracted with Turkish civilian trucking firms to transport supplies overland. The helicopters and trucks made the supply and distribution process more effective than it had been when only airdrops were used.<sup>18</sup>

When the refugees were relocated, CSC contracted with Turkish busing companies to transport the refugees from the mountains to the temporary refugee camps and Kurdish villages. Due to the rugged terrain, the buses were not capable of driving into the mountainous camps. So the Kurds would walk down from the mountains to predetermined rendezvous points. Trucks were

also contracted to haul the Kurds' meager personal possessions back home.

Air Force Command consisted of forces from Britain, France, Italy, Belgium, Canada, Portugal, Germany and the United States.<sup>19</sup> Their aircraft included fighters, refuelers, electronic warfare and cargo planes, plus many helicopters. Air Force Command's forces included pilots, aircraft mechanics, riggers, material handling equipment operators and the vast array of airmen necessary to support a major operation.

This organization first focused on the air supply missions. Not knowing how Iraq would respond forced Air Force Command to initially provide tactical air cover for the cargo planes. This slowed down supply delivery because of the extra coordination needed for each mission. Once it became obvious that Saddam was not going to forcibly resist the air effort, the cargo planes began flying without fighter escorts. The fighters were shifted to help protect the security zone.

Other Air Force Command missions included transporting soldiers within the area of operations, providing close air support, enforcing an Iraqi no-fly zone north of the 36th parallel, and performing aerial reconnaissance. The reconnaissance missions helped locate small groups of refugees and provided information about the Iraqi forces.

The Navy's command relationship to the CTF was not the same as it was for the other services. The Navy Command remained under EUCOM, but they coordinated with the CTF to help provide

the security zone's air cover.<sup>20</sup> Two aircraft carrier battle groups were used to support the operation. The first aircraft carrier involved was the USS Theodore Roosevelt; it was later replaced by the USS Forrestal.

As mentioned earlier, the exact sequence of actions required to accomplish this mission was not known when the operation started. While the mission unfolded, actions were quickly evaluated and recommendations for improvement were made continuously at every level. As a result, many of the eight major actions were conducted concurrently, as opposed to sequentially.

Specifically, air security was provided continuously during the operation by Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps aircraft. The Commander of Air Force Command served as the joint force air component commander (JFACC).<sup>21</sup> From April 7th through May 10th, TF A was stabilizing the situation in the mountains, while TF B was establishing the security zone and building the temporary facilities, and CSC was building, refining and operating the logistical system. Also, during most of April, AF Command delivered supplies by airdrop and then by helicopters, while CSC contracted for trucks, buses, and local supplies.

On May 11th, TF A began moving the Kurds from the mountains to the temporary camp at Zakhu, Iraq. The security zone was still being expanded and within a week, some of the refugees were being moved from the mountains directly to their homes. On May 13th, the Zakhu camp was transferred to UNHCR's control, and on

June 6, the last mountain camp was closed. All relief operations were turned over to UNHCR on June 7 and the next day, TF A soldiers began returning home. TF B continued to provide security until it was ordered to redeploy on September 19, 1991.<sup>22</sup> EUCOM considered Provide Comfort I complete when TF B began its redeployment.<sup>23</sup>

During the last week of July, EUCOM received another tasking order.<sup>24</sup> It was tasked to continue providing security in the no-fly zone in order to prevent Saddam from conducting another large attack on the Kurds. About 5,000 CTF personnel, from six countries, remained in Turkey to provide security. Specifically, fixed wing aircraft from Incirlik were tasked to continue providing the air cap; the MCC and some support soldiers continued operations at Silopi; some infantrymen, helicopters and support soldiers remained at Batman; and a special operations element returned to Incirlik to perform combat search and rescue.<sup>25</sup> This second mission is known as Operation Provide Comfort II, and it is still ongoing.

## CHAPTER IV

### PRINCIPLES OF WAR

The principles of war apply to humanitarian assistance missions in the same way as any other mission. Six principles in particular were applied in Operation Provide Comfort, and five of these will probably apply to any future humanitarian operations. Although each principle is very important, the principle of objective is first among equals because the objective provides the focus for all the other principles.

The principle of objective was the guide for every action taken during Operation Provide Comfort. The main objective was to reduce the suffering and dying of the Kurdish refugees. Each of EUCOM's three phased objectives and the eight supporting tasks was evaluated based upon how it supported this objective.

The main operational level objective was the same as the national objective. This will usually be true in these type missions. For this reason, the National Command Authority must provide the CINC as clear an objective as possible because it is easy to get diverted by conflicting issues.

It would have been easy to use the mission as a guise to remove Saddam from power. Although that may have been worthwhile, it would have undermined the United States' credibility and negatively impacted on the region's willingness to ask for U.S. military assistance in the future. Instead, the humanitarian force did only what was needed to reduce Kurdish



deaths and improve their difficult living conditions. The U.S. further strengthened its image regionally and globally because it stuck with the objective and did not discredit itself by using a false premise to overthrow Saddam.

The principle of offensive was used in several ways. When the United States entered Iraq to provide this assistance, it did not have the Iraqi government's permission. This caused Operation Provide Comfort to have a significant security requirement. Air and ground security were needed for the entire operation.

If the host country requests humanitarian assistance, the need for a large security force usually will not exist. In such cases, the host nation normally provides security for the humanitarian forces. But Iraq's political and military actions made it obvious that it did not want the refugees to receive assistance.

It is obvious that security was an important principle. The various threats required more soldiers to provide security than to actually perform the humanitarian mission. But without these soldiers using the principle of offensive to provide security, the mission would not have been so successful.

During the operation, senior leaders had to constantly balance the transportation lift capability between relief supplies and security forces. The leaders were very sensitive to their responsibility to accomplish the mission while protecting their soldiers. Deliberate decisions were made daily to shift

priorities between the two responsibilities. The result was that refugee lives were saved and relief forces were always protected.

The principle of unity of command was achieved by consolidating all of the forces under one commander. General Shalikashvili had had several EUCOM assignments before Operation Provide Comfort, and his brother had previously commanded the 10th Special Forces Group. The General's personal and professional experience contributed significantly to the mission's success.

The combined command structure allowed the overall efforts of the relief operation to be very effective. Liaison officers from each participating nation and each United States service were attached to the CTF staff. Communications teams, ANGLICO teams, linguists and other liaison officers were exchanged to increase the cohesion and effectiveness of the organization. U.S. communications assets were used extensively by the CTF to coordinate its unity of effort.

The economy of force principle was used very effectively in the mountainous regions. Seventy-five man, U.S. Special Forces companies, were the core groups which operated in the camps. Each company was augmented with several psychological and civil affairs soldiers. These small units coordinated the effort in each of the eight major mountain camps by working directly with the tribal leaders and international relief organizations. Less than five percent of the total force actually worked in the mountain camps.

Simplicity was another guiding principle. Even though many detailed tasks had to be accomplished, the big picture only required the stability, security and relocation of the refugees. As a result, the task organization was stream lined for efficiency, the eight broad tasks were assigned to the sub unit commanders, and each task was decentrally executed.

The task force was authorized to purchase local supplies and services to augment and speed up the logistical system. Regulations pertaining to local nationals flying on U.S. aircraft were modified to expedite the medical evacuation system. These and other changes were made to simplify the mission's execution, because the rules followed in a peacetime training environment did not apply. These changes point out the need to adjust logistical, administrative, and other functions to meet the requirements of a low intensity conflict or operation short of war mission.

## CHAPTER V

### LESSONS LEARNED

Many lessons can be learned from Operation Provide Comfort. Six broad lessons will be presented. These can assist CINCs and their staffs when planning and executing future humanitarian missions. The first two lessons are the most important. The others' relative importance will depend upon each unique mission.

Lesson one is to create a generic humanitarian assistance concept plan before a crises develops. Design the structure for the task organization and logistical concept. As a potential humanitarian assistance situation is developing, establish a planning cell early so it can adjust the generic concept plan to the specific situation. Direct this cell to coordinate with the country team in the affected country. By anticipating the mission and having a basic plan, it is much easier to have a positive impact early in the crises.<sup>1</sup>

During Provide Comfort, coordination with the country of Turkey was accomplished through a coordinated effort. The State Department, in coordination with the Joint Staff, took recommendations from the EUCOM headquarters and passed them on to the U.S. Ambassador, who then presented the matters to the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs. Also, the Combined Staff was assisted by the Joint U.S. Military Mission for Aid to Turkey (JUSMMAT).<sup>2</sup> JUSMMAT is an organization which is part of the U.S. Ambassador's country team.

JUSMMAT had been very helpful to the coalition during Operation Desert Storm. Most of the CTF's special operations forces and Air Force Command had conducted Desert Storm operations from Turkey, so many members of the staff had already developed an excellent working relationship with the JUSMMAT members. JUSMMAT provided guidance relating to several logistical matters, to include local contracting and purchasing.

There are few readily available humanitarian assistance sources that can be used as references to develop a plan. But some sources are EUCOM's Provide Comfort After Action Report, after action reports dealing with the recent humanitarian missions in Pakistan (tidal wave), Subic Bay (volcano eruption), Guantanamo Bay (Haitian refugees), and Florida (hurricane). The United Nations has some helpful written material and the Army's next edition of FM 100-5 should have a good humanitarian assistance section. Do not create your plan in a vacuum, use the experience of others.

EUCOM did not have a humanitarian concept or operations plan developed when it received the Provide Comfort mission.<sup>3</sup> Fortunately, many of its key leaders and participants had just conducted combat operations in the same area. Therefore, they had used several of the air corridors, air fields, command facilities, transportation networks, and host nation support facilities. Equally important, they had been coordinating and working with the country team and Turkish government only weeks earlier. This experience more than compensated for not having a

concept or operations plan. However, without this experience and a plan, it can be argued that the initial successes of the mission would not have been as great.

Lesson two, keep the objective in focus. Insist that the desired end state be identified before the first soldier is committed on the mission. Pass the objective down the chain of command and insist that all actions be done to support it.

Be particularly sensitive to maintaining neutrality and fairness if more than one ethnic, religious, armed, or political group is part of the population being helped. Remember, the mission is humanitarian assistance, which may include some nation building.

During Provide Comfort, there were numerous armed factions that would have liked special treatment by the Combined Force. To a limited degree, the coalition assumed a peace keeping role. But the potential was present to turn the humanitarian assistance mission into a full blown peace keeping operation. The CTF avoided this problem by maintaining neutrality.

Security may be a major part of the operation, but it is not the main reason for the mission. Rules of engagement must be developed to allow the relief soldiers to be protected, while ensuring that innocent people are not unduly harmed or threatened. The mission must be accomplished in a manner that improves host nation and regional diplomatic relations with the United States. Without a clear objective, the mission can easily get sidetracked.

Lesson three is that the humanitarian force must be tailored specifically for the mission. During the initial mission analysis, identify the military condition which must be created, the required steps to create the condition, and the necessary resources to accomplish the mission. A major part of the required resources are the soldiers. The types and numbers of troops will depend upon the military condition they must create. The exact numbers will probably need to be adjusted several times, but it is better to err on the side of strength. Your sequence of action should determine the troop phased deployment list into the mission area.

Without exception, consider a Joint Task Force to accomplish the mission. Ensure that each service attaches liaison members to the joint staff early. If applicable, include officers from other nations on the staff. Their participation will improve interoperability.<sup>4</sup> Consider organizing the soldiers along functional lines as opposed to service lines. The functional organization may achieve a more efficient and effective force.

Remember that there are limited numbers of active duty civil affairs and psychological operations forces available. It takes time to get reserve forces to augment the active duty operators. Request these forces immediately. Special operations soldiers were found to be ideally suited for working with the local nationals due to their training and maturity.<sup>5</sup>

The fourth lesson is to identify the best distribution framework for the relief effort. If possible, use the existing

infrastructure. The Kurdish tribal leaders were key participants during Operation Provide Comfort. They were able to provide physical labor, information about the population, interpreters, intelligence about security threats, and much more.<sup>6</sup>

If there is no infrastructure, it must be created. Again, if possible, use respected local leaders. This is a sensitive issue because it often results in petty jealousy among local factions, but it will be the most effective way to provide assistance. Above all, maintain neutrality.

Another asset to be used in the distribution system is the international relief agencies. Many of these agencies are likely to be involved in the relief effort before the military arrives. They will already have contact with the existing infrastructure and key leaders.

Over fifty agencies, ranging from the Red Cross to Doctors Without Borders, were providing assistance to the Kurds in Turkey, Iraq and Iran. However, their outstanding performances were not coordinated, and the lack of coordination reduced their combined effectiveness. TF A leaders' coordination role created a positive synergistic effect which improved the entire effort.

Future task forces must be prepared to assume a similar coordinating role. The international agencies will willingly accept and appreciate the military taking this action. The military's organizational structure, size, resources and ability to plan and execute large operations makes it well suited to take the coordination lead.



The fifth lesson is that the military should cooperate with the press in presenting the story to the American public. Regardless of the military mission, American public support is very important. And rightfully so, because the American people finance and provide the manpower for each military operation.

Although popular support is not something that the military can assure, there are certain steps that can be taken to enhance public support. The most important one is to work very closely with the news media to ensure that the story is accurately presented to America. In this type of mission, surprise, deception, and operational security are very different than they are in more traditional combat missions. Therefore, what operational reasons exist for not getting the news out to America as quickly as possible? Why shouldn't the press be allowed to present the message live?

Americans are decent people who willingly spend tax dollars to help those in need. Real time reporting significantly affects popular support, and it is a great way to remind America and the world that American goals and military missions are not always self-serving. In short, accurate, real time reporting makes America and the military proud of these missions.

This is not meant to imply that the press should be given uncontrolled access to the operational area if a security threat exists. But unless there is a real physical danger to themselves, relief force soldiers, or the people being assisted,

the press should be given cooperation as part of the mission. They did a great job reporting on Operation Provide Comfort.

The final lesson is that it is essential that the force be aware of the following three intangible factors: flexibility, patience and persistence. Flexibility is a virtue in humanitarian operations. The situation changes rapidly during relief missions. Priorities change daily based upon the availability of supplies, soldiers, transportation assets, and security considerations. The CTF's ability to quickly move large amounts of supplies was one of the key factors in Provide Comfort's success. This was only possible because the Combined Support Command remained flexible and responsive to the changing situation.

While being flexible, the force must also be patient. This kind of mission will require America's political and military leaders to proceed contrary to American strategic culture. America always wants quick, easy success. Operations short of war are not always resolved rapidly. Again, consider using the media to make the nation aware of this fact.

A sense of urgency will cause everyone to rush to assist the local population. But, if armed danger is present, security must be kept in mind or lives could be lost unnecessarily. In dangerous situations, security takes time to establish.

Even without a security threat, it takes time to transport soldiers, equipment, and supplies to the mission area. During the early days of the operation, the press, international relief

organizations and others may try to speed up the process.

Conduct the mission with urgency, but remain conscious of time, distance and friction factors. Serious problems take time to solve.

Finally, the force must be persistent. From the most junior soldier, to the most senior commander, everyone must continually keep the objective in mind continually. Various obstacles will arise. Some may be very difficult to overcome, but persistence will make mission accomplishment possible.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

Humanitarian assistance missions are here to stay. Since Provide Comfort, the military has participated in relief operations in Pakistan, the Philippines, Guam, Cuba, Florida and Somalia. In the near future, we may be involved in Bosnia-Herzegovina, sub-Sahara Africa, the Commonwealth of Independent States or numerous other locations.

Although we can expect assistance from our allies, the success or failure of these missions will greatly depend on the United States' response. The U.S. is the only country in the world which has the strategic lift and resource capability to rapidly execute large scaled missions at great distances. The world will not look to any other nation to provide the leadership in solving these and other regional crises.

The U.S. cannot and should not try to solve every world problem. Before using military force, the National Command Authority must decide whether military intervention is in the best interest of the United States. They and the Congress bear the awesome responsibility of committing our armed forces to any military operation. But, humanitarian assistance missions are a relatively low cost way to enhance regional stability and show good will. These operations usually generate a very positive and cooperative international response, and they are an excellent way to maintain our leadership position in this new world order.

## COMBINED TASK FORCE TASK ORGANIZATION

Listed below are the major organizations which participated in Operation Provide Comfort.<sup>1</sup> A wire diagram depicting the task organization is printed on page 10.

### Headquarters, Combined Task Force, Provide Comfort

#### Combined Task Force-Alpha

10 SFGA(+) (US) 1-10 SFGA (US) 2-10 SFGA (US) 3-10 SFGA (US) 40/3 Commando Bde (Royal Marine) (UK) SOCA TMS/112 SIG BN x 6 (US) NRI TRNS/112 SIG BN x 2 (US) EI/4th Field Ambulance x 2 (CAN) TM/432 CA CO x 5 (US) PSY DET/6/4 POG (US) TM/39 TACG (EOD) (US)	39 SOW(+) (US) 7 SOS(+) (US) 21 SOS(+) (US) 67 SOS(+) (US) 667 SOS(-) (US) 1723 STS(+) (US) SSD/52 SIG BN (US)
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#### Combined Task Force-Bravo

24 MEU (SOC) (US) BLT 2/8 (UK) HMM 264 (UK) 3/325 ABCT(-) (US) 3 SF Teams (IT) 4th AVN BDE 3ID (US) 6-6 CAV (US) TF 23 (-) (US) ANGLICO FCT 6 (US) Spanish AF (CH47/UH-1)	French Force BN FR Paramarines 1 Spanish Plt ANGLICO FCT 2 Spanish EXPED Force Para Bn (-) ANGLICO FCT 3 French AF (PUMA/GAZELLE)	3d CDO BDE RM(-) (UK) 45 CDO BN(UK) 1 ACG(-) (NL) Italian Folgore BDE 3 Inf Cos (US) SF CO(-) (US) 18th MP BDE(US) 18thENG BDE(US)
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#### Combined Support Command

21st TAACOM(-) 9th MMC 21st PER GP(-) 9th FIN GP(-) 16th CHEM DET(-) AMC(-) 82d ORD CO	29th ASG(-) 66th Maint BN 5th Maint CO 5th QM DET SSIG 593 S&S CO(-)	CTF Surgeon 7th MED LOG 159th AIR AMB C/3 FSB/3ID C/501 FSB/1AD 99th MED DET CMAGTF 1-91
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72d EOD  
279th SIG PLT(-)  
70th TRANS BN(-)  
14th TRANS BN

44th SIG

LSB BN(-)

Civil Affairs Command

CMOC (US)  
354th CA BDE(-)  
96th BN(-)  
3d CDO BDE

418th CA CO  
431st CA CO  
432d CA CO

Air Force Command

7440 COMP Wing (Prov)

81 TAC FTR WG (A-10) (US)  
86 TAC FTR WG (F-16) (US)  
36 TAC FTR WG (F-15) (US)  
552 ACACW (E-3 AWACS) (US)  
306 STRAT WG (KC-130) (US)  
39 TAC GP (US)  
43 ECS (EF-111/EC130) (US)  
52 TAC FTR WG (F-4G) (US)  
123 TRS (RF-4) (US)  
Canadian AF (C-130)  
Portuguese AF (C-130)  
Royal AF (C-130) (UK)

COM HELO - Provider OPS

4/8 AVN (UH-60) (US)  
4/11 ACR (UH-60) (US)  
502 AVN (CH-47) (US)  
Royal AF (CH-47) (UK)  
Italian AF (CH-47/UH-1)  
HMM-264 (CH-53/CH-46/UH-1/AH-1)

COMALF

37 TAC Airlift Sqd (C130) (US)  
61 TAC Airlift Sqd (C130) (US)  
302 TAC Airlift Sqd (C130) (US)  
317 TAC Airlift WG (C130) (US)  
143 TAC Airlift GP (C130) (US)  
58 MAS (C-12/C-21) (US)  
French AF (C-160/DHC-6)  
Belgian AF (C-130)

Navy Command

USS Forrestal/CVW-6

USS Dale USS Milwaukee  
USS Deyo USS Yorktown  
USS Butte USS Phoenix  
USS Gato USS Gallery  
USS Dewert USS Shenandoah

USS Theodore Roosevelt/CVW-8

USS Richmond K Turner  
USS William V. Pratt  
USS Leyte Gulf  
USS Caron USS Hawes  
USS Preble USS Vreeland  
USS Belknap USS Virginia

## INTERNATIONAL RELIEF AGENCIES

Listed below are the International Relief Agencies which provided assistance to the Kurdish refugees during Operation Provide Comfort.<sup>1</sup> Many of these organizations were already providing assistance when the U.S. forces arrived. They varied in size from three people to over one-hundred.

Action NORD-SVD	Japan Sotoshu Relief Committee
Adventist Develop & Relief Agency	Maltese Hilfs Dienst
American Friends Service Committee	Medical Volunteers Intl
American Red Cross	Mideast Council of Churches
American Refugee Committee	Operation Mercy
AMHURT	OXFAM
CARE	Red Cross & Red Crescent
Catholic Relief Service	Red Cross of Malta
Christian Outreach	Samaritans Pulse
Concern	Save the Children
Danish Church Aid	Swedish National Rescue Board
Doctors Without Borders	Swedish Rescue Service
Doctors of the World	Swiss Mission
Equilibre	Swiss Project of Emergency
Help	
German Bergwacht	Tear Fund UK
Global Partners	Turkish Red Crescent
Helo Mission	United Nations
Hulp AAN Kuterdan	UNICEF
Intl Action Against Hunger	World Council of Churches
Intl Committee of the Red Cross	World Food Program
Intl Medical Corps	World Relief International
Intl Refugee Year Trust	World Vision Relief & Develop
Intl Rescue Committee	World Vision, Australia
Irish Concern	
Italian Red Cross	

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3. David Mc Dowall, The Kurds, A Nation Denied (London: Minority Rights Publications, 1991), p. 38.
4. Ibid., p. 43.
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8. Judith Miller and Laurie Mylroie, Saddam Hussein and the Crises in the Gulf (New York: Times Co., 1990), p. 90.
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2. EUCOM AAR, p. 2.
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5. Julls number 71024-35616, p.1.
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9. Telephone conversation with MAJ Richard Helfer, former Commander of Company B, 1st Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne), (U.S. Commander of Camp Yekmal during Operation Provide Comfort), Little Rock, Ark. 8 January 1993.
10. Julls number 71024-35616, p. 2.
11. Joint Unit Lessons Learned Long Report (JULLS), Report Number 21049-45804, Assessment: Stop the Dying and Suffering/Stabilize the Population (USECOM: 1991), p. 1.
12. EUCOM AAR, p. 5.
13. Telephone conversation with MAJ Wayne Heard, former Operations Officer of 1st Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne), Charleston, S.C. 29 December 1992.
14. Ibid., p. 21.
15. EUCOM AAR, p. 13.
16. Ibid., p. 16.
17. JULLS number 71024-35616, pp. 3,4.
18. Bissell, 7 January 1993.
19. JULLS number 71024-35616, p. 3.
20. Potter, 17 February 1993.
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22. EUCOM AAR, p. 21.
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24. Potter, 17 February 1993.

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2. Joint Unit Lessons Learned Long Report (JULLS), Report number 42369-01443, Coordination With The Government of Turkey (USECOM: 1991), p. 1.

3. Potter, 17 February 1991.

4. Joint Unit Lessons Learned Long Report (JULLS), Report number 62147-05600, Allied Integration into the Combined/Joint Task Force (Zakhu, Iraq: 1991), p. 1.

5. Joint Unit Lessons Learned Long Report (JULLS), Report number 62017-49600, Special Forces was the Appropriate Response for the Initial relief Effort (Zakhu, Iraq: 1991), p. 1.

6. Helfer, 8 January 1993.

## TASK ORGANIZATION CHART

1. JULLS Number 71024-35616, pp. 2-3.

## INTERNATIONAL RELIEF AGENCIES LIST

1. Ibid., pp. 3-4.

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